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STATISTICAL PLANNING AND PRIORITY SETTING IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION OF THE SLOVENIAN STATISTICS

Submitted by the Central Statistical Office of Slovenia 1/

Abstract: The Slovenian Central Statistical Office has a Council which advises on its programme of statistical surveys in its National Programme of Statistical Surveys which is the essential tool for planning and priority setting.

Priorities are very heavily influenced by the transition process and by the agreement with Eurostat to adapt to the statistics of the European Union.

INTRODUCTION

1. Slovenia is a young and relatively small country in transition from a semi-market-oriented to a wholly market-oriented economy. It is also a country with a relatively high level of progress, a democratic system and an export economy that is oriented to demanding West European markets - and this is all reflected in the position of the national statistics. Years of contacts with West European statistics (particularly those of Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Austria) and with international organizations such as the OECD, as well as a register orientation, a facility in dealing with foreign languages and the study of methodological experiences of other countries, have provided the Slovenian official statistics with certain advantages.

1/ Prepared by Ms. Irena Križman. The author wishes to thank Mr.Tomaž Banovec and Mrs. Magdalena Žebre for their contribution to this paper.

2. Slovenia's European orientation and long-term trends aiming at joining the EU require a good and timely harmonization of the Slovenian statistics with international, and particularly European, standards. Harmonization has been carried out successfully ever since 1989 and it has been further intensified since joining the Conference of European Statisticians a year ago and also through the assistance Eurostat has provided for joining the PHARE statistical program. The anticipated associative agreement, the strategic determination regarding the accession of Slovenia to the EU and the signature of the Common Declaration on Statistical Co-operation between seven statistical offices in transition and EUROSTAT (2) will result in new time and contents priorities for Slovenia's national statistics.

3. This paper presents information on the organisation of national statistics, the statistical office's viewpoints on current and future international obligations, information on strategic trends to the year 2,000, and on the programming of statistical surveys and priority setting.

SOME GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOVENIA AND ITS NATIONAL STATISTICS

4. Slovenia is a country of only 20,000 square kilometres and about two million inhabitants. Every square km is inhabited by 98.6 inhabitants. The capital city is Ljubljana, with 275,000 inhabitants. The GDP per capita in 1991 amounted to $US 6,133. In Slovenia, it was decided already in 1988 that each legislative proposal has to be verified with reference to its relation to international and especially European standards, and for this purpose the so-called Slovenian White Book was issued.

5. A relative reduction of budgets related to the increased extent of liabilities both in business and in the public sector, as well as growing complete or partial non-response of reporting units in statistical inquiries require that new approaches to organization and priority setting in statistics be adopted. This is particularly true of countries in transition like Slovenia. The managing of small countries involves a relatively higher expense. This is equally true for Slovenia and Slovenian statistics. All the rules quoted by Georges Als (1) in his description of the Luxembourg Institute of Statistics are applicable to us, too. The reasons he mentioned are as follows:

- costs of methodological preparations, training, organization and managing are as large as in the case of big countries;
- the size of samples is in inverse proportion to the absolute size of the measured population, which means that the costs of collecting data through sample surveys are higher;
- due to limited possibilities, the opportunities for expert training are limited;
- important complex tasks are carried out by one expert only, which results in a higher probability of errors in method and even calculation; and
- a small number of observed entities causes the problem of data presentation respecting the principle of statistical confidentiality.

6. Due to the above mentioned reasons, and especially in the case of small countries, it is vitally important to establish an adequate organisation and to engage in priority setting. Practice has shown that the most efficient statistical systems are those in the Nordic countries and Benelux countries which have developed register-based statistics that are bound to vertically and horizontally linkable records which have to be adequately organized both as regards methodology and classification.

7. The most important arguments in favour of such an orientation are: faster, better and cheaper statistics produced by offices which are responsive to the citizens of the country. A better organization of records also enables a more correct arrangement of the rights and obligations of citizens (e.g. social support, tax payments), a more rational operation of national authorities and the production of cheaper, better and more

timely statistics. The above mentioned reasons are even more important for countries in transition in which, due to a lack of financial and human resources, and with simultaneous growth of liabilities resulting from the transition into a market economy, such an orientation can signify a strategical advantage. Register-oriented statistics enable the establishment of the Geographic Information System (GIS). By using x and y coordinates each building can be located in space and via linkage of uniform identifications the information can be integrated with population data, data on the socio-economic operators, buildings, agricultural holdings and the like. This data base facilitates all decisions being well prepared at all management levels.

8. As early as 1988/89 the Slovenian statistical system had looked into and found some important methodological solutions in the fields of national accounts (according to SNA and ESA) and economic classifications (ISIC, NACE-Rev.1). Cooperation with statisticians in Germany, and particularly in the statistical office in Nordrhein-Westfalen, has been taking place for more than 15 years. Thanks to these windows into the developed statistical world we could develop a data bank based on the German model, develop the foundations of register-oriented statistics according to the Danish model, and through a Norwegian window become acquainted in 1987 with Norway's methodological approach to the system of national accounts (SNA) and to statistics in general.

ORGANIZATION OF NATIONAL STATISTICS IN SLOVENIA

9. Slovenia has a centralized and functionally organized national statistical system. The basic tasks are performed by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. The office employs about 320 people, of
which over 100 hold an academic degree. It is important to highlight that all through the period of the former state, Slovenia had its own statistical office and, for the most part, it had - in addition to the federal law - a special republic Law on Statistics, as well as a programme of statistical surveys. Due to this circumstance, the transition was much easier prior to, during and especially after, acquiring independence. We have an established statistical tradition and experts at least in some fields which makes it easier for us to approach the task of harmonizing our approach with international standards. We also have a solid foundation in the field of information technology (we have, on average, one personal computer for every two employees, and they are all linked into a network; and having them connected to the main frame enables a modern type of work operation and direct links to the domestic and international environment).

10. The legal bases of national statistics in Slovenia are regulated by the Law on National Statistics. This law is under review in Parliament and has gone through its first reading. We expect that it will be passed in the first half of this year. The law defines basic principles of the operation of national statistics; the status and tasks of the institution which carries out basic tasks in the field of national statistics; the composition and duties of the statistics council which is a professional advisory body for strategic and development questions; statistical advisory committees for various domains of statistics; the national program of statistical surveys and their methodological bases; registers; conditions of collecting, processing and storing of data; data protection; statistical applications; dissemination of data; and international statistical cooperation.

11. The law is based on the principles that are written in the Resolution on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (3). Besides, we have studied statistical legislation of a number of developed countries and of also some countries in transition. Based on the principles of organizing the statistics in market economies, we have prepared the draft version of the statistical law. In this regard we are particularly grateful to Mr. Engelage (Eurostat) and Mr. Brungger (EFTA) for their enormous help and for the expertise they provided in the review and for their proposals for improving the text.

12. The draft proposed law on the business register of Slovenia and the draft law on the central register of population are other important parts of the legislation our office has prepared together with the authorized holders of the administrative evidence. They in fact continue the trend towards register-oriented statistics, which will be harmonized with international and European standards.

13. In compliance with the valid Law on the Government, the statistical office is part of the state administration and, as a government agency, it is directly subject to the Prime Minister. The solution is of a transitory character until the Law on National Statistics is passed. It is

expected to arrange the status of the national statistical office. Assuring the declared professional independence of the office will be more efficient via legal authorizations and with complementary self-financing where the price of services is, certainly, protected and the scope of such activities is limited. It is also extremely important to assure the continuity and qualification of the leading staff who should be independent of changes in the government and parliament.

14. The process of transition of the contents requires certain measures and re-organization of the administration, classification and different knowledge of the staff. It is very important that through a flexible, project-oriented organization we try to classify the existing staff in the most rational way. As regards knowledge, we put stress on new skills in methodology and classifications and in experience with developed countries as regards applying international standards to the national ones in practice. A pre-condition for this is for the staff to have language skills which are at a satisfactory level since we are devoting quite some money and time to language training. A special problem we have encountered is the lack of adequate skills in the field of new methods of data collection (ie with using samples instead of complete coverage) which could be carried out in the so-called social sector prior to privatisation. When private property and a large number of small socio-economic operators appeared, a rational collection of quality data from them emerged as a very important problem.

STATE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS IN SLOVENIA IN AN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

15. Slovenian national statistics were first introduced at the 40th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians in June of 1992. For our statistics this was an extremely important step in making contacts with the international statistical environment. The materials obtained through participating in international meetings have facilitated us in preparing transition programmes of good quality. We believe that the organised common actions, prepared by the Conference of European Statisticians, Eurostat, the OECD or some other international institutions, are of importance for us, as they allow for larger implementation of human and financial resources. In this regard we must explicitly highlight the technical assistance provided to us by Germany, the cooperation we received from the Austrian Central Statistical Office and the technical assistance we received from the ILO, which have managed to increase our chances in the transition process.

16. In the spring of 1992 we established, at that time only informally, contacts with EUROSTAT. After joining the regional statistical programme PHARE a year ago, we started to participate in selected Eurostat actions, workshops and courses. We were offered quite a bit of help through consulting and at negotiating. This help was efficiently put into practice. As a new, young republic, we found ourselves in the company of older ones who by 1990 had already, through special agreements, taken part in international statistical organizations. In January of 1994 we signed a common declaration of statistical cooperation between Eurostat and seven European countries in transition (2). The signing of this declaration not only involved some positive judgment of our statistics but it also resulted above all in the necessity of both parties obtaining data for negotiation. In December of 1993, the first exploratory negotiations on the associative agreement between Slovenia and the European Union were completed and they increased the need for having formal cooperation in the future.

17. The new and almost immediate requests for statistical data (especially for export-import data and basic business cycle indicators) needed in negotiations, required a faster pace of progress on some previously planned tasks (eg the initiation of combined nomenclatures into customs documents and custom duties). The Declaration assumes an adequate legal organization of the statistical service, the introduction of statistical standards, classifications and methodologies applied in the EU and internationally, conveying data to the EU as other member countries do, and preparations for the transfer of the data required for the negotiations on accession.

18. The signature of the Common Declaration was also for the Central Statistical Office of Slovenia (4) an important step which will enable the Slovenian statistical system to supply national authorities and the European Commission with certain statistics even before the accession of Slovenia to the EU for negotiation purposes, and from the moment of the accession; and to supply them with all statistics in the same way as other Member States do. For these purposes technical assistance will be provided.

19. There is no doubt that the tasks of the Slovenian CSO will increase rapidly, not only as far as the introduction of EC statistical standards, methodologies and classifications are concerned but also in view of the preparation of national programmes and co-operation projects as well as coordination of statistical projects with projects of various authorities. On the other hand the signature facilitates the statistical office

completing some necessary legal steps faster, and it supports, through different means, the office's professional position, especially with regard to the choice of scientific methods, definitions and methodologies. It also supports its coordinating role concerning statistical surveys of administrative bodies.

20. Eurostat would like to improve the PHARE statistical co-operation. But some of the concerns cannot be linked to the case of Slovenia, which has benefited from PHARE statistical co-operation for only about one year so far. Since then good results have been achieved not only with reference to the implementation of statistics, but also with two pilot surveys which are to commence in 1994. What we could improve is the prioritisation of multi-annual and annual co-operation needs. But we could not accept rationalization of the EU's intervention by exploiting synergies between country programmes and not between projects if national needs in co-operation projects are not sufficiently respected.

21. Each country has its own specificity and that is why association agreements differ. In addition, the later that an association agreement between an ECO country and the EC is entered into, the more demanding it is for the country in question to follow the stages achieved in the EU. This automatically leads to differences in requirements both concerning statistics (for instance reporting in HS or in the combined nomenclature (CN)) among ECO countries and priorities by ECO countries. Does this mean that all seven or maybe twelve ECO countries will get membership in the EU at the same time? If not, priorities and programmes may considerably differ among ECO countries, and synergies existing between ECO countries and between statistical domains may be weaker than expected. Would that lead to adjustments being made in a cooperation project of an ECO country to co-operation project(s) of another ECO country (countries) with different deadlines but similar projects? We really hope that it would be constantly borne in mind that the work programmes of ECO countries really have to be used as a guide to Eurostat in order to use limited resources and that it would be flexible to respect different speeds and levels achieved.

22. In March of 1994 the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia will sign a special "Common Declaration" with Eurostat. The signing ceremony will be attended by assisting countries who shall offer actual technical support proposed in the Proposals for the PHARE Programme (9). Eurostat has already sent us the list of statistics, the legal basis, various definitions and classifications and technical materials concerning data dissemination (5) which are to be respected by the national statistical offices of countries in transition when they are engaged in planning and priority setting for their national statistical programmes and current operations.

STRATEGIC TRENDS OF THE SLOVENIAN NATIONAL STATISTICS BY THE YEAR 2,000

23. Activities continue in arranging the status of the national statistics, comparable to statistical offices in developed European countries and other legal bases regulating the National Programme of Statistical Surveys, the infrastructure of registers, meta data bases and records.

24. The register orientation of Slovenian statistics according to the Scandinavian model assumes that data will be acquired in a rational way, especially from the existing administrative sources and by sampling, even though a different method (full coverage) was used in the past. It is important to respect common standards in the field of classifications, methodologies and standards for data processing and dissemination, as well as a high level of coordination on the statistical and administrative level.

25. The present law provides statistics with the possibility of acquiring individual data from all sources and allows the connection and application of data for statistical purposes. All this requires organized, institutionally-arranged and horizontal coordination of the contents and functions of the administrative records and registers in Slovenia. In this view, and especially during the transition period, the coordination of horizontal linkage is of special importance.

26. National statistics, in line with the existing and planned legislation, have the right and the duty to comment on all data collection which is not planned by the National Programme of Statistical Surveys (NPSS). This is intended to prevent multiple data collection and to assure

common methodological and classificational bases. In addition, the data of the national statistical office are official data. Therefore, the statistical office should also be involved in the international presentation of the data.

27. Harmonization of the contents and objectives of NPSS with the international standards means continuing the work that was undertaken on harmonizing national classifications and methodologies with the international (and particularly European) standards. This means a gradual harmonization of our standards accepted in the frame of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Conference of European Statisticians (the CES) and other specialized organizations (like ILO) and supranational ones (Eurostat). A particularly important document is the Common Declaration on cooperation in the field of national statistics among Eurostat and the following seven countries (the Republic of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Slovenia) (2). The above mentioned declaration, signed on 17 January, 1994 by Slovenian statistical authorities, puts important demands before us both as regards the contents of the transitional fields (data on the flow of goods and services, persons and capital and data referring to priority setting), that are important for such negotiations. The tasks defined in the Statistical Programme of the European Union for the 1993-1997 period (6) are particularly important for us as a long-term trend.

28. Improving the dissemination function is a very important task, as it can be listed as a key infrastructural task for the horizontal linking of priority domains of statistics. A timely and constant data supply to users is one of the principles of the organization of national statistical services, since timely and correct information means a strategic advantage in a market society. The construction of infrastructural data bases, offering various types of training to data suppliers and data users, and providing explanations of the methodological limits of data applications - all this reduces the probability of users making incorrect or even erroneous data applications. The latter is even more important in the temporary period of converting to new standards. The important task is to make the users (governmental bodies, professionals, the public, the mass media and others) understand and use the new methodologies and classifications. For a correct understanding, the internationally harmonized standards will have to be adequately arranged, terminologically speaking. The model planned is EUROVOC - the European dictionary of terms which contains the terminology of the Official Journal of the European Communities in all languages of The Twelve.

PROGRAMMING OF STATISTICAL SURVEYS

29. Programming of statistical surveys is a demanding process in shaping the needs of users into a nationally significant programme of statistical surveys. The statistical council, which according to the law on national statistics, is planned as a professional, methodological and advisory body for issues connected with strategy and development, co-operates in the elaboration of the NPSS. It is composed of representatives of the professional bodies and of public administration. The tasks performed by the statistical council are as follows:

- preparation of starting points and contents of the national programme,
- evaluation of the proposed contents of the national programme and initiating the changes,
- discussing the proposals of laws and other regulations in the domain of national statistics,
- proposing the methodological bases for the statistical surveys of national importance,
- resolving professional dilemmas in the national statistics,
- proposing the rationalization and modernization of the domain,
- giving initiatives and proposals for international cooperation in statistics,
- proposing the classifications that are used as national standards.

30. As the operating bodies of the council, statistical advisory committees are established for each major field of statistics. In making the programme, institutions of the national and public administration have an important role beside individual members of the statistical council and

advisory committees. The holders of administrative records and the future managers of registers have a particularly important role to play (eg the Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry in the case of the register of agricultural holdings, and the Health Insurance Agency in the case of the register of health insurers) as of course, the main data users and suppliers do.

31. The national programme of statistical surveys (NPSS) is the central tool for planning, coordinating and monitoring activities in the field of national statistics. Statistical surveys involve the collecting, processing, storing, analysing and presenting (i.e. dissemination) data on important mass phenomena from the economic, demographic and social domains and on the problems of environmental protection and natural resources. The programme is assumed to last several years. The formal proposal of the programme is prepared by the statistical office in collaboration with the statistical council. After receiving its confirmation, the Government forwards it to Parliament for a procedure where it is passed in a similar way as the laws. Once a year, the statistical office reports on the course of the programme to the Government and the National Assembly. Larger surveys (censuses, and surveys with comparatively long questionnaires) are carried out on the basis of special laws, especially for reasons of financing.

32. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia which carries out the tasks of national statistics is responsible for the coordination of the elaboration and execution of the programme. Besides the statistical office, there are authorized programme operators who implement the surveys in specific fields (eg. the Health Protection Institute; National Bank; Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs; and the National Employment Office). The programme of statistical surveys comprises over 233 titles of statistical surveys which are carried out by the statistical office, and about 120 of those carried out by authorized operators. The principal fields include all standard fields of statistics, comparable to the statistics of developed countries. Transition and harmonization with the international environment is evident, both as regards contents and terms, in the specially important part of the programme which defines over 40 long-term development tasks.

PRIORITY SETTING

33. Full or associate membership in the EU imposes large and demanding tasks on national statistical offices. The accepted statistical programme of the EU (6) represents a direct obligation (in the sense of legal bases) and more clearly defined obligations (as regards contents, deadlines and even techniques) for all national statistical offices of member countries. The fourth part of the programme of European statistics consists of sectoral programmes involving cooperation in statistical fields with non-member countries. Article 76 of the Treaty on the European Economic Area is reflected in the joint EU-EFTA statistical programme.

34. Special attention is paid to countries whose economies are in the process of becoming more market-oriented. Cooperation assumes the elaboration of long-term programmes, divided into statistical fields where projects and individual tions are classified into priorities. Long-term programmes are also planned by the common declaration of the seven statistical offices of EC(ıtries and Eurostat (2), which also provides financial support through PHARE.

35. Planning and priority setting in the Slovenian national statistical system is carried out through the National Program of Statistical Surveys. The following important criteria are taken into account:

- application of statistical data for the purpose of politics on the national and regional levels, for a the requirements of socio-economic operators and for democratic decision-making (independent professional public);
- meeting the demands of the future associative agreement on joint membership in the EU and the planning needs of the future full membership;
- meeting the demand of the Common Declaration on Cooperation of the Seven Statistical Offices and Eurostat (2) and of the special agreement;

- gradual harmonization of contents and terms of the National Programme of Statistical Surveys with the statistical programme of the EU (6);

- arranging and harmonizing also on the level of administrative data collections, and determining which specific obligations are already in force in the EU (eg. harmonization of business registers for statistical purposes (8), introduction of SAD into the customs documentation, recognizing educational qualifications, and the issuing of training certificates);

- considering the stipulation of the common declaration on transmitting data to Eurostat as to the list of statistical indicators (5) where, beside the expected harmonization of the contents and classification, the periodicals and type of data transmission are planned; and

- presentation of the Republic of Slovenia as an entity in international publications and data bases on the basis of internationally comparable data.

36. Some of the most important long-term objectives of Slovenian statistics are outlined below together with a general indication of the extent to which harmonization with the larger international environment is being achieved.

37. Harmonization of statistical classifications with international standards is a long-term task of infrastructural significance. Principally, this refers to harmonization of the systems of both economic classifications (activities, products, services and goods) and social classifications (occupations, educational attainment). Introduction of the new Standard Classification of the Activity, harmonized with NACE, Rev.1, is progressing. The work began in 1987, and we think that by April of 1994 the classification will become official since it was sent as the proposal of the Governmental regulation for confirmation. The regulation on introducing the Standard Classification of Activities assumes the date of its coming into effect from 1.1.1996 onwards, and allows for an earlier one and a half year test period. This year we are planning a large census of socio-economic operators which, among other things, will help assure a quality determination of activities. We will use the revised criteria for classifying activities and the definition of statistical units in line with European standards (7). The next step is the revision of the Nomenclature of Products according to PRODCOM. We plan the harmonization of the classification of services. A new classification of occupations and also harmonization of the classification of training, education and science are being prepared.

38. In the EU countries, the harmonization of business registers for statistical purposes (8) is proceeding. The time period planned for establishing harmonized business registers is 31 December 1995. Slovenia has had a business register for over 10 years now. However, it does not completely meet the prescribed European criteria. Work on the development of legislative procedures for the law on business registers has been initiated. We expect that it will be passed in the first half of this year. The objective of this law is to establish and maintain the recording of the register for statistical purposes and the maintenance of the administrative business register. It will be centrally monitored and, besides defining uniform identification, will contain some of the most important data on the registered socio-economic operators, on the demography of enterprises, especially for national purposes, for the socio-economic operators themselves and their associations, for the harmonization of the national statistics with European standards and for the further development of the register-oriented statistics.

39. Assuming that a harmonized business register and the census of socio-economic operators will be in place in 1994, after the test period of introducing the new Standard Classification of Activities, the next priority is revising and upgrading enterprise statistics, and especially monitoring small and medium-size enterprises and defining statistical units according to European criteria (7).

40. Another priority is the continued upgrading of the system of national accounts according to ESA, with special stress being placed on introducing quarterly and financial accounts. As a special methodological task we highlighted the Account of general government and its compulsory levies.

41. The monitoring of business cycle indicators will be completed by the revision of the existing and the introduction of some short-term indicators which are not yet monitored by Slovenian statistics. The introduction of business cycle questionnaires according to EU standards is also considered to be very important.

42. The EU foreign trade statistics monitor the joining of non-members into the liberalized flow of goods in the EU with statistical data, assuming that sources and methodologies of data are harmonized. They are planning to monitor data in the combined nomenclature (CN). The holder of this function in Slovenia are the Customs authorities, since CN has to be introduced into customs documentation. The cooperation of our office is also very important since foreign trade data are completely based on customs documents. This is also related to the large task of introducing the VAT tax system.

43. For us, trade in services at least in some fields of services is a new task. The Slovenian statistics shall co-operate in the pilot research in the field of road traffic which is being conducted by Eurostat. Similarly, in cooperation with other institutions, and especially with the Bank of Slovenia, we shall try to provide data on the exchange of all services.

44. The main objective of revising and upgrading agricultural statistics is to harmonize the statistical monitoring of the agricultural sector with the demands of the national agricultural policy, while at the same time harmonizing them with the standards of the UN/FAO and of the EU. The establishing and monitoring of the register of agricultural holdings is especially important. The Ministry of Agriculture is the holder of this register. By the end of 1995 we will prepare open questions for the preparation of a draft proposal for the Law on the Register of Agricultural Holdings. The register itself will be set after the census of agricultural holdings which is expected to be conducted before the year 2,000. By satellite teledetection we shall acquire data on land use as per main elements. The project of satellite teledetection has existed within Slovenian statistics for over seven years. Due to the success of the project we were included in the MARS project in 1993.

45. Related to the liberalized flow of labour, it is very important to monitor data in the frame of the European Community Labour Force Survey project. In Slovenia, the large and fairly detailed test survey has been being taken since 1989, while in 1993 it was regularly introduced for the first time into the national statistical program. In 1992, we adapted the questionnaire to EU standards. The survey is carried out on a sample of 8,000 households in May of each year.

46. Demographic statistics with special emphasis on migration and projections are also considered important. The importance of data on migration flows is interesting not only for national policies but also in the international frame. Besides, migration is among the [illegible] assumptions in elaborating the population projections. The Slovenian statistical office is carrying out a methodol[illegible]oject on harmonizing the integral definition of the population, including migrations, with the international standards. Thanks to assistance we have received from Eurostat, we acquired software and expert assistance, and in 1993 we elaborated a set of projections of the population of Slovenia in line with international criteria.

47. In keeping with the further process of democratisation in the country, income statistics shall be very important for the realistic measurement of the standard of living. This involves the continued further harmonization of the Family Budget Survey, possibly introducing the Time Budget Survey and the analysis of income data, and elaborating social indicators.

48. Due to the relatively high proportion of budgetary resources devoted to social transfers in our country and the growth of certain categories of population in need of social support, the development of the statistical monitoring of this field is very important.

49. The harmonization of wages statistics, and particularly the introduction of a labour cost survey or of a pilot survey in 1986, is also considered important.

50. The Statistical Computing, Communications and Informatics project anticipates that there will be a gradual introduction of standards in the field of Information Technology and EDP for statistical purposes.

51. We have enumerated in this section only some of the tasks that we consider most important to develop and make progress on. They are fully defined in the NPSS and are included in the Proposal for PHARE Programme, 3rd Revision.

CONCLUSION

52. The preparation of statistical survey programmes and priority setting is an extremely demanding task, due to the necessity of assuming users' needs. In countries under transition this is even more difficult, due to the changes under way throughout the social and economic structure. At a relatively early and strategically important stage in Slovenia, the decision was made to aim at European integration. This decision helped the Slovenian statistics, through their contacts with German, Austrian and Nordic statistical offices, to start the process of transition and harmonization with international standards. Joining the CES in 1992 and PHARE a year later has accelerated this systematic and programmed process. Signing the common declaration with Eurostat in the frame of the desired access of Slovenia to the associative agreement with the EU requires additional requirements as regards data needed for negotiations. We estimate that with additional human and financial resources we will be able to work on harmonizing the statistics at the latest, until the envisaged full membership in the EU is attained.

53. On the basis of our otherwise brief experience in the field of transition and cooperation with international statistical offices, we propose some general conclusions which we believe are characteristic of countries in transition which are at about the same level of development as Slovenia:

(1) Work on the development and harmonization of statistical standards is proceeding in the statistical work under way in developed countries, and therefore it is important that countries in transition are on a certain level of harmonization of general social environment and statistics and that as soon as possible they become actively included in the further development of international standards.

(2) Programming of statistics and priority-setting is especially important in transition countries which must achieve the expected level of harmonization in a relatively short period of time and with modest funding. In this view long-term and short-term programmes are important, whereas we anticipate that these programmes shall differ among the countries in transition with regard to the achieved level of transition of the entire society and the statistical offices themselves.

(3) Countries in transition which have achieved a comparatively high level of development cooperate particularly in common projects together with developed statistical offices that are, in any case, selected as the assisting (partner) country. The transition is carried out in various countries by various dynamics, and this is one of the reasons why they should not be grouped into special groups of countries in transition. Even at the 41st plenary session of the Conference the participants underlined the fact that an appropriate unified strategy towards countries in transition is not possible due to the various levels of development among them (10).

(4) Programmes of international institutions should be as harmonized as much as possible with national priorities being respected to the utmost. In this view the role of the Conference as the coordinator of coordinators is extremely important. The integrated presentation of the international statistical work programmes which was presented for the first time at the 41st plenary session of the Conference, is also an important step in this direction.

(5) Besides the international harmonization of the developmental aspects of Slovenia's national statistics, the co-ordination of the priorities within the country and the co-ordination of contacts with international organizations are especially important. In this view the following is required:

(a) introduction of general standards in administrative records as well. Thus the transition and harmonization of standards are required on the administrative level as well,

(b) the coordination of dissemination and interpretation of statistical data to the external international environment should be carried out via the national statistical office. This is why international institutions actually implement this, by addressing all the demands for statistical data only to NSOs.

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